



STEENS MOUNTAIN LANDOWNER GROUP  
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February 1, 2006

Congressman Walden  
c/o Colby Marshall  
colby.marshall@mail.house.gov

Dear Colby,

Thank you for the information regarding the Task Force on Improving the NEPA Act.

It is very enlightening to see that this Committee has done their job. It seems they have done a thorough job. Thanks Greg!

However, it would enhance our position to have the Steens Legislation specifically incorporated in the Task Force testimony or Recommendations, if possible.

I believe we would want to support the draft recommendations put forth by the Task Force. (Deadline 2/5) .

With the Steens Act, it seems we have expanded the “environment” in regards to NEPA, by including private property and specific purposes that should promote, enhance and protect those lands and the economy, in a meaningful exchange for Wilderness designations and private land trades. It would be helpful in the future to know specifically how we deal with this, in regards to NEPA. Could you help us in a time frame that would be within the NEPA Task Force, February 6, 2006, deadline?

It also seems that within the NEPA Task Force, Group #9 recommendations: They could include the Steens Legislation, specifically to the “Studies” for consideration and “a. evaluates how and whether NEPA and similar environmental laws passed since NEPA’s enactment interacts; and – b. Determine the amount of duplication and overlap in the environmental evaluation process, and, if so, how to eliminate or minimize this duplication.”

I have attached our issue statements to this letter in an effort to incorporate them into this NEPA public comment so that we may be identified as having many similar concerns and problems as those deliberated on through the NEPA review.

Best regards,

Susan A. Hammond-Steens Mountain Landowner Group,Chair

## LOCAL ISSUES DIRECTLY RELATED TO COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF NEPA

-Cooperative Management is not the norm for government agencies. This would be unique and innovative in the instance of the Steens Area.

-Overbearing government regulation; agency promotion and continual recognition of additional layers of "planning processes" are not economically feasible for the private sector. This mode of operation doesn't allow for necessary, on-the-ground, timely management. There are windows of economically viable activities that are being lost because of the un-cooperative attitude and lack of or necessitated agency directed planning processes that may or may not be necessary. Over time, it will seal the failure of the Act.

-The vegetation on private property on the mountain has been managed with herbicides and prescribed fire for many years. The agency has extinguished naturally occurring fires, and discouraged and threatened legal recourse in regard to any fires in the past 20 to 30 years.

-The Purpose #9, within the Act, "To establish a citizen's management advisory council for the CMPA", has not been fulfilled. This Steens Mountain Advisory Council has not been a "citizen's" management advisory council. It has been an "agency" management advisory council, advisory to the agency at the agency's discretion. Private property input into management decisions has been discouraged or stopped through rule establishment and meeting procedures.

-No positive provisions have been made that would lead one to believe Co-operative Management would be protected for the future. Attempts have been started, but because of the regulatory overburden of bureaucracy, and no recognition of economic value, it was not acceptable to private landowners.

-The importance of "economic value" needs to be communicated to the agency, and promoted, for co-operative management to succeed. Without economic priorities, private property cannot survive. This consideration is inherent to the historic private property owners on the mountain, but is a new consideration for the agency and is not readily accepted or understood. The economic cost of the planning itself is foreign to the agency, but must be considered.

-Steens Act--- Sec. 112- Roads and travel access. The inventory for existing roads, by the agency, is flawed. It does not "promote and foster co-operation, communication and understanding to reduce conflict". After 5 years there is no base-line data recorded. Roads in and out of the Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, and private land access have been attempted to be closed, or actually closed, by the agency.

-The SMAC is not playing any sort of elevated role in BLM's decision making or within the public process.

-BLM disregards any portion of the Steens Act which does not support the agenda. BLM says that Steens Act is trumped by other rules or regulations.